Office of the Dean
McCormick School of Engineering & Applied Science
Northwestern University
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Effort Reporting Guidelines for Faculty

Since the University receives significant external funding, it must assure Federal and other sponsors that the assignment of time and associated salary and fringe benefit costs to the projects they sponsor is fair, consistent, and timely. The University fulfills this responsibility through its Effort Reporting System (ERS). Quarterly effort reporting is required of faculty and staff in departments with sponsored funding. The guidelines below were created to assist in filling out the effort reports.

Step 1: Upon receiving email notification from your department Business Administrator (BA) and/or the Effort Reporting System (ERS) that your effort report is ready, proceed to the ERS web site (https://ersweb.itcs.northwestern.edu/GenericERS) to review/complete your effort report. Log in using your NU netid and password.

Step 2: Click on the pending certification link (an integer in the table that appears) in the "STATUS/MY TO DO" box. Usually, it will just be for the "Current Period," which is the immediately previous quarter. (If pending certifications exist for prior periods, you should also review/complete those.)

Step 3: Click on your name to link to the certification for your effort.

Step 4: For SPONSORED ACCOUNTS, review the far-left column ("Plan") which indicates the time commitment indicated on the original proposal. (If the number indicated as the "Plan" does not seem correct, contact your department's Research Administrator.) Also, review the "Payroll %" column, which reflects the percent of your salary charged to that sponsored account for the quarter. Note that "Cost Sharing %" reflects the difference between the "Payroll %" and "Plan." Finally, distribute your effort to the individual accounts in the far-right "Certified Effort %" column. For each account, this number should reflect your actual effort and typically matches or exceeds the "Plan." (Clicking on the chartstring in the "Sponsored Accounts" column brings up a description of the sponsored account.) For research-active faculty at McCormick, it is common that the effort on Sponsored Accounts totals 30%-60%, though this might be as low as 0% or as high as 75%. _It is very important to accurately reflect effort in this section._ Effort on sponsored research may be audited by funding agencies.

Step 5: Effort that cannot be attributed to a sponsored account is reflected in the lower part of the table under "Non-Sponsored Accounts." Typically, this effort includes teaching, undergraduate advising,

administrative duties, committee work, non-sponsored research, proposal writing, etc. The Grand Total effort, sponsored and non-sponsored, must sum to 100%.

Step 6: Click "Proceed" at the bottom of the page. If any errors or warnings appear, contact your department's Research Administrator. If you have already done this, click "Continue."

Step 7: On the next page that appears, you are asked to distribute the "Non-Sponsored" activity among various tasks. Use reasonable estimates. The total effort distributed in the categories below must equal the total "Non-Sponsored" effort indicated on the line just above the gray table in which effort is entered.

- INSTRUCTION: If you have taught a course during the quarter, estimate the fraction of your total effort dedicated to course preparation and teaching and enter it under "Instruction." This category also includes undergraduate advising. Typically, this would be 20%-40% of your total effort per course for quarters in which you teach and 0-10% (advising, course preparation) in non-teaching quarters.
- DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH: Effort on research that cannot be attributed to a sponsored account (advising graduate students on research that is not sponsored, attending conferences not directly related to a sponsored project, etc.), should be entered under "Departmental Research." This would be the remainder of your total effort after accounting for sponsored research, instruction, and administration (below). During a teaching quarter, this will typically range from 0% (for significant sponsored research levels) to about 40% (for low levels of sponsored research).
- ADMINISTRATION: Effort on departmental or University affairs including proposal writing, committees, student recruitment, etc. should be entered under "Administration." For most faculty, this would be 5%-15% of total effort. For department chairs, associate chairs, and directors of graduate studies, and other positions with administrative responsibility or proposal writing, this would be a larger percentage (15%-40%) of total effort.
- OTHER CATEGORIES: The other categories listed in the table (Other Institutional Activity, NU-funded NMH/NMFF Activity, NMFF Activity, and Industry-Sponsored Clinical Trials) are rarely used by McCormick faculty.

Step 8: Click "Proceed" to review the values that were entered. To revise any values, click "Return" at the bottom of the page. Otherwise, click "Certify" to finalize the Effort Report.

Step 9: Click "Exit Form" or "Next Form," if there are more persons for whom to certify effort.

Step 10: Continue by certifying effort for graduate students, postdocs, or other personnel. This is typically more straightforward since often all their effort can be attributed to a single sponsored project and their non-sponsored activity is zero. Repeat steps 3-9 as appropriate.

Questions regarding effort reporting should be directed to the departmental business administrator or departmental research administrator.